

Salvation, A FREE Gift?

I would like to look at every phase of salvation, justification and sanctification and its relationship to it being a gift and what our part in it is.

Salvation is a free gift, and yet it is to be bought and sold. "In the market of which divine mercy has the management, the precious pearl is represented as being bought without money and without price. In this market all may obtain the goods of heaven. The treasury of the jewels of truth is open to all. "Behold, I have set before thee an open door," the Lord declares, "and no man can shut it." No sword guards the way through this door. Voices from within and at the door say, Come. The Saviour's voice earnestly and lovingly invites us: "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich." Rev. 3:8, 18.

"The gospel of Christ is a blessing that all may possess. The poorest are as well able as the richest to purchase salvation; for no amount of worldly wealth can secure it. It is obtained by willing obedience, by giving ourselves to Christ as His own purchased possession." Christ's Object Lessons 116

What is it that we are to use as currency in the market of Heaven? How can salvation be said to be free if we are told that we have to buy it?

What is it that we have and can use to buy, or give, in return for our salvation? It is self, our will, the inner force that drives us and causes us to make the choices and decisions that we make. This is what God wants us to sell to Him in exchange for our salvation. All of us have this, so none can say that they don't have what God is asking for. Jesus put it this way, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus saith unto him, "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Jesus answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." John 3:3-7. The surrender of self, putting self to death, is called the New Birth. God takes "self" with all its wrong thoughts, feelings, and habits and replaces them with His thoughts and feelings, removing the bad habits. We sell self in return for salvation. We, in other words, give God control of our lives. We give Him permission to control our thoughts and feelings. It is our thoughts and feelings that make up our characters, and it is only our characters that we will be able to take to heaven. Our thoughts and feelings have to be in tune with God's thoughts and feelings if we ever hope to get to heaven. God through His Holy Spirit is the only one who can change them into His likeness. Because of this we must give them to Him to control.

Justification is where some believe that the giving of the free gift ends and that they must now take over and work out their own salvation. Some think God *helps* them to overcome, but they actually need to do it. They pray, God please help me to overcome this or that bad habit, such as criticism. They ask God to help them gain the victory day after day, month after month, and nothing happens. They get discouraged and wonder why God doesn't or won't help them. Think about what would happen if He did. If God were to merely *help* them, who would take the credit? Oh yes, they would say that God *helped* them gain the victory, but who would they feel did most of the work? Wouldn't they? Of course. Even if they didn't feel that they did most of the work, they would still take credit for some of it and guess who would be back in control? Self - proud of what it had accomplished! "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephesians 2:8,9 So, how then do we gain the victory over bad habits - sin? Well, *we* don't. We can't gain the victory; God gives us the victory. Remember, I can do nothing. It is only God who has the power to do it in and through me. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Philippians 2:13 "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:" Philippians 1:6. So, we simply ask God to give us the victory, and then give Him all the glory when He does.

Some will say, but didn't Paul tell us in Philippians 2:12 "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." True, he did tell us that. But what is the work? What is the hardest thing for us to do? Isn't it to give up our will, our self - what I want to do instead of what God wants me to do? This is the "work" that we are to do and it is very, very hard work and we are to do it with fear and trembling, because if we don't we are in big trouble. In fact, the very next verse tells us who is actually doing the work of sanctification. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Philippians 2:13 Our work, and it is not easy, is simply to remain surrendered to God and He will then give us the victory. He will give us the will and the desire to do it, and He will also do the doing of it - give us the power to do it, or work through us by His indwelling Spirit. It is also put this way in various places by Ellen G. White. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. How is this? Fear lest you shall weave into the fabric your own threads of selfishness. Fear lest you shall err in choosing the timber for your character building. God alone can supply the solid timber. Fear lest your will shall not be held in subjection to Christ's will, lest your hereditary and cultivated traits of character shall control your life. Fear lest self-will shall mar the high purpose that through you God desires to accomplish. Fear to trust to your own strength. Fear to withdraw your hand from the hand of Christ and attempt to walk life's pathway without His abiding presence. Fear lest your words should savor of self-importance. Fear lest you sin against the Holy

Ghost, and be left to your own course. Fear lest you make a mistake, and bring dishonor upon the name of the Lord. This is the fear of the Lord.”

"It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." When you are completely surrendered to God, withholding nothing, and you ask Him to give you the victory over some sin in your life, you can have full confidence that He will give you the victory. You need fear nothing if you have done this. But if you have anything you are still holding onto, or any doubt or questions at all about His ability to give you the victory, forget it. He will not give it to you. "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." James 1:6-8. "Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Mark 9:23,24 We must have full confidence in God in order for Him to be able to work in our lives.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:8-10

If we are to boast in anything, what is it to be? "My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever." Psalms 34:2, 3; 44:8

"The law claims from man entire obedience through the whole period of his life. Hence it is impossible for him by future obedience to atone for even one sin. And without the grace of Christ to renew the heart, we cannot render obedience to the law of God. Our hearts are by nature evil, and how, then, can they bring forth that which is good? "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Job 14:4. All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin. Therefore, he who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. True, man cannot be saved in disobedience, but his works should not be of himself. Christ must work in him to will and to do of his own good pleasure. If man could save himself by his own works, he might have something in himself in which to rejoice. But it is only through the grace of Christ that we can receive power to perform a righteous act.

"Many err in thinking that repentance is of such value as to atone for sin, but this cannot be. Repentance can in no sense be accepted as atonement. And, furthermore, even repentance cannot possibly be exercised without the influence of the Spirit of God. Grace must be imparted, the atoning sacrifice must avail for man before he can repent." The General Conference Bulletin, March 5, 1895 par. 33

"The apostle Peter declared concerning Christ, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Acts 5:31. Repentance comes from Christ just as truly as does pardon. The sinner cannot take the first step in repentance without the help of Christ. Those whom God pardons, he first makes penitent." The General Conference Bulletin, March 5, 1895

Salvation is free! Not only justification, but sanctification as well. It is all a free gift. All that's necessary is to surrender our all to God in exchange for it. The Galatians fell into the same trap and Paul had to get after them for it. Here is how he said it. "O foolish Galatians, Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:" It is God who began the work in your life and it is God who will finish it. Our part is to simply submit to the work that He does.

In fact, it's not only our salvation that is given to us but everything we have and are is freely given to us.

Most would say that they have had to work hard for what they have. They may very well have. Luke 6:24 says, "woe unto you that are rich! (or obtained wealth through your *own* strength and hard work and take credit for it) for ye have received your consolation (reward)." Where do we get the ability to work hard? Who gave us life? Who keeps us breathing moment by moment? If God were to remove His sustaining power from us we would drop dead instantly. If we think about it seriously, everything we own, has been given to us by God, either directly or indirectly. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" 1 Corinthians 4:7. Very few people realize this, and many who hear or read about this fact may want to deny it, but God wants to give us, yes, give us, everything we need or want, that is within His will.

Not only does God want to give us spiritual blessings but He wants to give us physical blessings as well. This is something many don't understand or accept. Because of their unbelief they miss out on so much! "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." 3 John 1:2. Not only is our soul to prosper, but He wants our finances and health to prosper, as well.

“...for the LORD shall greatly bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it: Only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command thee this day. For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee.” Deuteronomy 15:4-6

“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” Matthew 6:25-34

Luke shares with us similar thoughts when he relates what Jesus told him and the disciples. “And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Luke 12:22-32

Paul tells us in Philippians 4:19 that “my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” How much does God have? It is all His. We are told in Psalms 50:10-12 “For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.”

Why don't we see God's people being blessed and taken care of more? There are some basic reasons. Unbelief, not putting God, His kingdom and His righteousness first, and not giving God all the credit and all the glory when He does things for us. Remember, what do you have that wasn't given you? Even our ideas and solutions to problems are given to us by Him. In truth, God can only bless us as He wants to when we put His kingdom and righteousness as our first priority followed by giving Him all the praise and all the credit, believing what He says is what He means. There are those such as George Muller and Hudson Taylor who have understood this and taken God at His word and found Him to be more than trustworthy. When we do what God asks of us, He has promised to give us all the rest – even exceeding our expectations!

God gives us everything we need to be saved and to sustain life. He gives us sorrow for our sins. He gives us repentance and forgiveness for our sins. He gives us righteousness. He gives us sanctification. He gives us victory over sin. He gives us eternal life. He gives us our daily bread. He gives us the things those who don't trust Him have to work for. There is nothing good that God doesn't give us if we trust in Him.

This in no way gives license to be lazy, expecting God to take care of us. “We commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” 2 Thessalonians 3:10 “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” Ecclesiastes 9:10. We are to be diligent in whatever we find to do, having the building of God's kingdom as our first priority. We also need to be balanced in how much work we do. To be a workaholic is as wrong as being an alcoholic. We need to take quiet time alone with God in nature as well as working for Him. 1 Corinthians 9:25 says “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.”

In conclusion, by believing His Word, surrendering our will to Him and making His kingdom and His righteousness our first priority, giving Him all the praise and all the Glory, He then promises to open up the windows of Heaven and give us everything, including peace.